

PREVALENCE OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: A STUDY BASED ON THEIR BIRTH ORDERSKainat Zia^{*1}, Dawood Rahim², Danish Mahmood³**Original Article**

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Abstract

This article mainly focused on the deviant behavior (comprising vandalism, misconduct, general deviance, and assault) of college students (boys and girls) in relation to their birth order. The correlational research design was employed and data of (N=288) was taken through a purposive sampling technique, comprising first born (n=93), middle born (n=106), and last born (n=89) around the colleges of Lower Dir and Swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The collected data was then analyzed via statistical tools including ANOVA, t-test, and correlational analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 version software. Correlational analysis revealed that vandalism, misconduct, general deviance, and assault are significantly positively correlated with each other. The comparative analysis demonstrated that male students scored higher on deviant behavior than female students. Further data comparison disclosed that male students showed high scores on misconduct, general deviance, and assault than female students. Lastly, ANOVA indicated that last born students scored more on deviant behavior than middle born students while first-born students scored least in deviant behavior among all three birth orders. This article would be beneficial for filling the gaps in Pakistan-based literature for future studies in the same domain. It would practically help educational psychologists better understand and cater to students' deviant behavior in institutional premises and in general settings.

Keywords: Deviant Behavior, Vandalism, Misconduct, General Deviance, Assault, College Students, Adolescents, Birth Order.

Introduction

An individual's personality goes through a substantial period of development during adolescence. New encounters could be unified into the personal reasoning of the person as body modifications and relationship dynamics change over this period. New feelings and emotions are being catered as there are significant changes in one's sense of identity. The juvenile starts to shape several personality traits at this age that will influence the meaning of life. According to studies, this crucial period in a person's life greatly impacts their birth order.

One of the pioneers of contemporary psychology, Adler in the 1928, studied birth order and the impact it has on nature/behavior. His work highlighted the general traits and behavior patterns for birthranking, he underlined everyone has self-perceived importance in their house. This seeming order and importance might be the person's sequential order in the family. He concluded that order

of birth had an explicit relationship with the traits/behaviors of a person. Personality theorists asserted that family standing can impact a person's capabilities and behavior consolidation. Each birth order is believed to have its unique personality traits (Kaul & Srivastava, 2018).

Starting with firstborns, they possess an exclusive and desirable position, at least till the next child. The parents are usually delighted at their birth and spend a lot of time and give immense care. They are more conformist. Research assumes that firstborn turn out to be leaders. They are usually more ambitious than other birth orders. Their adolescence period is extremely adult-oriented because they interact with adults the most. It has been discovered through studies that they have power and continue to worry about that position throughout their life. They can employ power over their little brothers and sister, but simultaneously they are more focused on the disciplinary actions of their parents because of their expectations (Schultz & Schultz, 2015; Klas, 2002). Meanwhile the middle-born, triggered a lot of turmoil in the peaceful life of firstborn, they are also having a special position in the household. Middle ones rarely encounter the dominance once undertaken by the first child. Whenever another child is brought into the family, middle-born never feels the sense of deposition as it felt by the first kid. It was also seen that parents have usually modified their rearing patterns and practices from time to time due to an increase in family members. Parents usually get a little concerned and worry about their own actions and may take a more flexible approach to the middle child (Salmon, 2003).

Literature suggests that middle-born children are more defiant, less meticulous, have a lower sense of religiosity, and establish lower academic grades than their elder siblings. Research indicated an impulsive pattern of behavior in a middle child, and innovative as compared to their older ones (Eickstein, 2000; Saroglou & Fiasse, 2003). Likewise, the youngest child is usually a relaxed and secure adolescent but has the slightest interest in academics. The last-born teen is considered to have the minimum experience compared to the siblings and is unruly. Because of such perceptions, the youngest adolescents may utilize these excuses to their benefit and acquire the habit of manipulation for their own sake (Herrera, Zajonc, Wiczorkowska & Cichomski, 2003).

Even though, a few adolescents may experience discouragement by the presumptions and expectations tagged to them by older ones. They are often accredited by their family members for shortcomings. Nevertheless, it is likely for the younger ones to recognize themselves as the redeemers of the house and accomplish the goals of others in the family with self-esteem and significance (Stewart & Campbell, 2001).

The youngest ones often achieve higher ranks/ status in the work when assigned as adults. On the contrary, as they get older, the youngest ones may hold the powerlessness and reliance of being a child. Unfamiliar with hard work and harsh realities, they used to be the care of adults. These ones often feel maladjustment in adulthood and socially acceptable behaviors (Schultz & Schultz, 2015). In such situations, deviant behavior can occur in any birth order when they are being spoiled for a long time by the family. While their deviant behavior is often taken as activities that are not likely to occur in society and may have legal concerns. Deviant behavior is a series of actions /disposition that is not in accordance with any institutional setup or ethical ways of conduct (John, & Frank, 2021).

Such behavioral patterns have become a prominent issue in recent years. Many students are showcasing such unbearable behaviors and thus causing an imbalance in the learning atmosphere within the colleges. During the adolescent era, youngsters adapt to societal norms and values, but this behavior is the major obstacle in this conformity process. It has been mentioned in the literature

that the main etiology of such deviant behavior has not been elucidated or fully narrated by scholars (Crossman, Hardesty & Raffaelli 2019). The conception of deviant reactions from college students might be closely associated with the definition of the social norm which was written a hundred years ago (Pickhardt, 2009).

In recent years, deviant behavior could be identified as actions that are a deviation from the cultural norm and has become an intimidating issue globally. It has been notified that each semester, the number of students with deviant behavior increased generally in educational institutions (Hayden, 2011; Damron-Bell, 2011). Deviant actions might lead to issues including peer pressure, oppression, and ferocity right within a college, it also included some serious consequences like social maladaptation and juvenile crimes (Rodger, 2008; Furniss, 2000).

Literature Review

Birth order has long been a common variable in psychological studies but attempts to evaluate its influence on behavior have repeatedly produced unreliable and contradictory results. However, society believes that firstborn children are different from their siblings who were born later. A study indicated that firstborns receive different treatment from parents as compared to lastborns (Keller & Zach, 2002). This research also inferred that fathers and mothers spent more individual time with firstborns than their younger children, and it has a significant effect on their children's behavior. Parents one to one interaction and caring for children have a direct effect on a child's personality. Paternal enhanced facial interaction, eye contact, and communication with an infant have immense importance as mother interaction. Parents' simultaneous discipline is more evident in the first infant as compared to others (Mbaabu & Orodho, 2014).

Flowers and Brown (2002) analyzed in their research that firstborns gradually get more anxious about their actions than lastborn during stressful events. A study discussed that firstborn athletes experienced physical and cognitive anxiety-based reactions before competition than other birth orders. They also wrote that firstborns realize more accountability than last-born to execute leadership obligations. The first family born has a perceived responsibility regarding their role in society and set a precedent for younger siblings, it may create turmoil in their lives and enhance their anxiety levels. Boys' unruly behavior is associated to birth order and has a direct linkage to their cognitive state during anxiety/stress as compared to girls/females in the same situation. Bodily symptoms/ fights are more obvious in boys than girls in terms of the deviant state of behavior (Mtsweni, 2008).

So, deviant behavior is a kind of unruly behavior or deviation from norms, law, and order of any society (Idris, 2016). It has been mentioned that deviant actions boost during the adolescent period (Hanimoglu, 2019). In this article, deviant behavior and its association with college students are under focus, hence literature is evident that academic performance and rapport during college days has greatly influenced by the birth order of boys/girls. Such behavior patterns also arise teacher student disputes (Torrente & Vazsonyi, 2016; Agboola & Salawa, 2011).

A study explained that the frequency of physical strikes on educators has worsened in past few years by middle and lastborn because some students have been bullied by seniors thus causing deviant behaviors in them and they exhibit disturbing patterns in adjustment and learning. Without good discipline in college, teachers usually find it difficult to deliver lectures and make learning effective (Njoroge, Onduso & Thinguri, 2014; Nabiswa, Misigo & Makhanu, 2016). Deviant behavior powers college students across the universe and they are unable to endure academic strictness (Babatunde, 2016). He maintained that many teachers in American colleges have searched for

transfer to colleges to lessen antisocial behaviors. Smith and Smith (2016) explained that the disruptive behavior of high college students and flourishing cases of violence have led to the migration of urban college teachers to rural colleges. A single act of unruly behavior can impact student learning and it has been traced to their birth orders in some cases as well (Mezrigui, 2015).

The current research aims to explain the prevalence of deviant behavior in teenagers of different birth orders. Previously, little attention has been paid to the relationship between birth order and deviant behavior. It is because of these limited studies on a given topic, this study will act to bridge this gap. The role of birth order is immensely significant in molding the personality and overt behavior of college teenagers. These study findings will help various professions including educationists, educational psychologists, and counselors, to aware the general population that birth order can lead to personality changes, and sometimes these changes can be fatal in the form of deviant behavior. It will also help parents to review the way they deal with their children, and to modify if it is leading towards deviant behavior in their children.

In clinical settings, young adults and their parents can be counseled about their behavior by highlighting birth order. The result can offer a quick way of assessing personality; by merely knowing birth order. This could provide clinicians, counselors, and other professionals in the behavioral and social fields with a way to determine behavior and help those in need. It could be helpful for a human resource manager to allocate employees to their suitable departments. And can also educate parents on what to expect when engaging with their children and know how it could be useful in gauging their development as the years proceed.

Methodology

Objectives

- To study the relationship between birth order and deviant behavior of college students.
- To know about the gender differences in the deviant behavior of college students.
- To find out which birth order exhibits more deviant behavior among college students.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive relationship between birth order and the deviant behavior of college students.
2. Male college students scored higher on deviant behavior as compared to female college students.
3. Last born shows more deviant behavior than the firstborn and middle born among college students.

Research Design and Sample

The correlational research method was used in this study. A purposive sampling strategy was employed and $N=330$ college students from different private and government colleges of Lower Dir, and Swat were taken for this study initially. A sum of 330 questionnaires was administered. After removing 30 unfinished questionnaires, 300 forms were involved for the initial analysis. After initial analysis using SPSS23, a further 12 forms were excluded as they were having very low scores on deviant behavior, so the final sample of this study was $N=288$ ($n=148$ male and $n=140$ female).

Inclusion Criteria: College students (girls & boys) in Lower Dir and Swat, with high scores on deviant behavior, as mentioned above lower-scored questionnaires were removed after the initial analysis.

Exclusion Criteria: College students with lower scores on the research instrument and students from universities and high schools were excluded.

Instrument

Normative Deviance Scale (NDS) Deviant behavior was scored using *NDS*. This scale was mainly developed to assess the lower forms of societal norm violation and misconduct that usually prevail in most societies around the globe (Vazsonyi et al., 2001). This present study's findings used only four subscales out of a total of seven subscales (vandalism, misconduct, general deviance, and assault), with the authors' permission. It is 5 point Likert scale and responses for all items based on the lifetime occurrence of such unlawful behaviors (1=never, 2=one-time, 3= two to three times, 4= four to six times, and 5= more than six times). The reliability coefficients on vandalism, misconduct, general deviance, and assault are .63, .62, .76, and .74 respectively.

Procedure

Firstly, permission was taken from multiple colleges in Lower Dirand Swat. Informed consent was filled in from the identified sample. The purpose of the study was explained to participants who were ready to be part. The instructions were given before distributing the questionnaire. The instruction includes that there was no right or wrong answer. We only required your actual answer options. After that, the questionnaire was given to participants on the first page and the demographic form was filled out. Which include gender, education, and birth order. Then participants filled in the questionnaire with full attention, and no one felt discomfort during the process.

Ethical Consideration

There was no deception or fabrication included in the study. Real information was given in the informed consent. The confidentiality of the participants was maintained, and no identifiable information was taken. There was no relationship between the participants and the researcher. Participants were treated with respect and were protected from any type of harm.

Results

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of participants (N=288)

Demographic variables		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Boys	148	51.4
	Girls	140	48.6
Birth Order	Firstborn	93	32.3
	Middleborn	106	36.8
	Lastborn	89	30.9
Education	1 st Year	162	56.3
	2 nd Year	126	43.8

Table 1 indicates the frequency and percentage of college students with respect to gender, birth order, and education. Male students ($f=148$, 51.4%) and female students ($f=140$, 48.6%) participated in the study. Middle born students ($f=106$, 36.8%) were greater in number as compared to firstborn students ($f=93$, 32.3%) and lastborn students ($f=89$, 30.9%). First year students ($f=162$, 56.3%) were greater in number as compared to second year students ($f=126$, 43.8%).

Table 2. Pearson correlation among birth order and deviant behavior among college students (N=288)

Variables	1	2
1. Birth Order	-	.117*
2. Deviant Behavior	-	-

* $p < .05$

Table 2. shows the Pearson correlation between birth order and deviant behavior. Results indicate that birth order has a significant positive correlation with deviant behavior $r(286) = .117, p < .05$

Table 3. Reliability analysis of the scale and Pearson correlation among subscales of the study instrument with birth order (N=288)

Variables	items	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Misconduct	8	.622	-	.46**	.55**	.46**	.09
2. Assault	12	.742		-	.62**	.57**	.09
3. Deviance	20	.761			-	.54**	.07
4. Vandalism	8	.628				-	.15*
5. Birth order	-	-					-

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 3 shows the number of items of subscales, reliability analysis of subscales, and Pearson correlation among study variables. The misconduct subscale consists of 8 items, $\alpha = .622$, assault subscale consists of 12 items, $\alpha = .742$. The deviance and vandalism subscales have 20 items, $\alpha = .761$, and 8 items, $\alpha = .628$ respectively. Findings indicate that all the subscales of the deviant behavior instrument have a significant correlation with each other at $p < .01^{**}$ level. While birth order has significant positive correlations with vandalism only $r(286) = .15, p < .05$.

Table 4. Mean, standard deviation, and t-values based on gender difference of college students on vandalism, misconduct, deviance, and assault (N=288)

Variables	Male ($n=148$)		Female ($n=140$)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Vandalism	14.14	4.75	13.47	4.50	1.21	.225	-.41	1.74	-
Misconduct	15.77	4.74	13.25	4.14	4.80	.000	1.48	3.56	0.56
Deviance	34.59	8.57	28.91	7.90	5.83	.000	3.76	7.59	0.68
Assault	20.50	7.01	17.09	4.69	4.82	.000	2.02	4.80	0.56

Table 4 shows mean, standard deviation, and t-values for college students on vandalism, misconduct, deviance, and assault. Results show significant mean differences in misconduct with $t(286) = 4.80, p < .001$. The findings show that boy college students ($M = 15.77, SD = 4.74$) significantly scored higher on misconduct as compared to female college students ($M = 13.25, SD = 4.14$). Results also indicate significant mean differences in deviance with $t(286) = 5.83, p < .001$. The findings show that male college students ($M = 34.59, SD = 8.57$) scored significantly higher on deviance than female college students ($M = 28.91, SD = 7.90$). Results show significant mean differences in the assault with $t(286) = 4.82, p < .001$. The findings show that male college students ($M = 20.50, SD = 7.01$) scored significantly higher on assault than female college students ($M = 17.09, SD = 4.69$).

Table 5. Mean, standard deviation, and F values of firstborn, middle born, and last-born college students on vandalism, misconduct, assault, and deviance (N= 288).

Variables	First born(<i>f</i>) (<i>n</i> =93)		95% CI		Middle Born(<i>m</i>) (<i>n</i> =106)		95% CI		Last Born(<i>l</i>) (<i>n</i> =89)		95% CI		<i>F</i>	Post-hoc	<i>p</i> ²
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>			
Vandalism	12.93	3.88	12.19	13.75	13.83	5.14	12.85	14.83	14.66	4.68	13.68	15.65	3.18*	<i>l>m>f</i>	0.21
Misconduct	14.33	4.58	13.41	15.26	13.96	4.52	13.09	14.83	15.46	4.63	14.15	16.47	2.71	--	--
Assault	18.28	5.13	17.22	19.34	18.58	6.52	17.33	19.84	19.73	6.95	18.29	19.56	1.38	--	--
Deviance	31.53	8.24	29.83	33.22	30.99	8.74	29.31	32.67	33.15	9.14	31.22	35.07	1.66	--	--

p < .05

Table 5 indicated the mean, standard deviation, and F value for comparing the prevalence of vandalism, misconduct, assault, and deviance among first, middle, and lastborn college students. Statistical values showed the significant results of vandalism, $F(2,285) = 3.18$, $p < .05$. The pair wise post-hoc comparison between the variables revealed that last born ($M = 14.66$, $SD = 4.68$) scored higher on vandalism than first born ($M = 12.93$, $SD = 3.88$) and middle born ($M = 13.83$, $SD = 5.14$) college students. While there were no significant differences in misconduct, assault, and deviance among college students.

Discussion

The focus of this study was to see the relationship between birth order and the deviant behavior of college students. Their gender differences were also analyzed on deviant behavior. Firstly, the study hypothesized that a positive association will be present between birth order and the deviant behavior of college students. This study's results confirm the significant positive relationship among these variables, which was in accordance with the findings of previous studies (Shek & Law, 2015).

Recent studies state that firstborns experienced a shift of attention when the next child is born; they become exhausted as they seek attention due to parental neglect (Eckstein & Kaufman, 2012). Negative behaviors or interactions with siblings, parents, and peers stimulate deviant behaviors in adolescents. Deviancy training occurs in adolescents when they talk to each other about norm violations and affirmative attitudes, which ultimately leads to adolescent delinquency (Berg, 2013). Various pieces of research aimed at working on the relationship between the order of birth and the prevalence of deviant behavior. Literature explained that the middle one is more inclined towards performing nutritious and unlawful behaviors than first- and last-borns (Ali & Gracey, 2013; Cundiff, 2013).

The second hypothesis stated that male college students scored higher on deviant behavior as compared to female college students. The analysis confirms it, and the results are in accordance with the findings of previous research that explained that males exhibit more deviant behavior as compared to female adolescents and adults (Korn & Noach, 2017). Amongst the aberrant behavior, academic misconduct is frequently present among adolescent students, for instance, cheating during exams, replicating the same home task and assignments, and highly plagiarizing work in projects, etc. (Olga & Kruzhkova, 2018; Korn & Davidovich, 2016). Jensen and colleagues (2002) studied that the sample in their research was inclined to take academic duplicity as a regularly occurring act that is often not taken as depraved and did not perceive it as applicable.

Regarding gender variations in a statistical result, no reliable findings stand out. Literature had evidence regarding the copying behavior of males during exams being higher than females, whilst numerous studies indicated no significant gender-based differences in behaviors (Jordan, 2001). A form of deviant behavior is driving violations, which leads to a serious risk to life in adolescents. Though adolescent drivers are reported to be at the greatest of their physiological, and perceptual capability, their association with accidents is often raised because of their intrinsic nature and peer pressure to show manliness via risk-taking actions (Sandra, 2017).

Thirdly, it was hypothesized that the middle born are more deviant than the first and last born but results do not indicate the same which is contrary to the findings of previous studies as well (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Previous articles indicated the role of the middle sibling is often seen as reckless, and more innovative as compared to their elder siblings, who are perceived to adapt to the rank quo (Saad, Gill, & Natarajan, 2005). The results show that the last-born exhibit more deviant behavior among all birth orders. The hierarchical order of children often stimulates, and promotes few of the reactional variations among siblings, it has been suggested that the order of kids influences the care/nurturance they obtain from their parents, especially the youngest of siblings being encouraged and loved by parents (Rodica, 2015). It has been notified in many studies that parental controlling behavior often decreases from the first to the last born, while the last born goes on to experience some leverage. The first child tends to be the most disciplined one by the parents as compared to other siblings in the family in nearly all areas of the world. In this way, a theory proposed with the title of differential discipline contends that the last-born kids face a more merciful disciplinary atmosphere as related to first-born kids, which can often have an opposite effect and lastborn often develop careless and impulsive personalities (Hotz & Pantano, 2010).

Implications/Suggestions

- The current study reported considerable gender variations in scores among college students on deviant behavior. Consequently, it will fill some of the gaps in gender-related literature on the same variables.
- The results of this study would aid mental health professionals catering to children from different birth orders.
- This study will help various occupations including counselors and psychologists, teachers, educational psychologists, and coaches to make the overall population conscious about birth orders that often lead to deviant behavior if a child is not nurtured properly during the developing years.
- Counselors can psychoeducate the parents about the adolescent deviant behavior by highlighting birth order which will help them in an adaptation of an effective way of dealing with their children. Also, parents can be educated on what to assume when connecting with their kids.
- Moreover, these findings can offer a fast way of anticipating personality traits; by merely understanding the birth order as a precursor of multiple behaviors in later years of life.
- This study may direct mental health clinicians, educational counselors, and other associated service providers in the behavioral and societal fields as an instrument to determine behavior and assist those in need.

Limitations

This study has certain possible limitations.

- The sample used in this study covered only Dir and Swat Districts, therefore, it may encounter some external validity issues.
- Secondly, researchers cannot ignore the cultural and societal differences and their effect on overall personality, so the results may vary from one group of people to another.
- Some extraneous/confounding variables might impact the behavior of the students during data collection.
- Lastly, only children were not included in the study due to the very small number of families with only child in the area where research was being conducted.

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